

## CHAPTER 11

### Hûd

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 10 *sections*; 123 *verses*)

The name of this chapter is taken from that of the Prophet Hûd, whose history is referred to herein. He seems to have been the first prophet to a people living in the Arabian Peninsula.

The opponents are warned first, and the truth of the revelation is asserted in the second section, and the opponents are challenged to produce ten chapters like it. A cruel and persecuting enemy is then warned of the evil fate of previous people. The third and fourth sections deal with the history of Nûh, the fifth with that of Hûd, the sixth with that of Sâlih, the seventh with that of Ibrâhîm and Lût, and the eighth with that of Shu‘aib. The ninth section compares the wrongdoers and the righteous, and the tenth comforts the believers.

The chapter seems to be a complement to the last, which deals mostly with abstract questions relating to the truth of revelation, while this illustrates the truth of those questions by referring to the histories of former prophets. It is wholly a Makkan revelation, and must be placed at about the same period as the last chapter.

#### SECTION 1: A Warning

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

**1** I, Allâh, am the Seer. A Book, whose verses are characterized by wisdom, then they are made plain, from One Wise, Aware:

**2** That you should serve none but Allâh. Surely I am to you from Him a warner and a giver of good news.

**3** And ask forgiveness of your *Rabb*, then turn to Him. He will provide you with a goodly provision to an appointed term, and will bestow His grace on every one endowed with grace.<sup>a</sup> And if you turn away, I fear for you the chastisement of a great day.

**4** To Allâh is your return, and He is Possessor of power over all things.

**5** Now surely they cover up their breasts<sup>a</sup> to conceal (their enmity) from Him. Now surely, when they put their garments as a covering,<sup>b</sup> He knows what they hide and what they make public. Surely He is Knower of what is in the breasts.

**3a.** *One endowed with grace* signifies one on whom Allâh bestows His grace. The *dhî fadl* here is the possessor of devotional blessings in addition to the material benefits spoken of in the preceding words.

**5a.** *Thanâ sadra-hû* (lit., *he folded his breast or bosom*) means *he concealed enmity in his breast or bosom* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). This meaning is made clear in the words that follow.

**5b.** *He covered himself with his garment, in order that he might not see nor hear* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). According to the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by *Shaiikh* Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, the meaning is that *they make their garments a covering over their ears, and this signifies their holding back from lending an ear, or it is an allusion to their running away*.

## Part 12

**6** And there is no animal in the earth but on Allâh is the sustenance of it, and He knows its resting-place and its depository. All is in a clear record.

**7** And He it is Who created the *samâwât* and the earth in six periods; and His Throne of Power is ever on water<sup>a</sup> that He might manifest (the good qualities in) you, whoever of you is best in deeds.<sup>b</sup> And if you say, You shall surely be raised up after death, those who disbelieve say: This is nothing but clear deceit.<sup>c</sup>

**8** And if We delay for them the chastisement for a stated period,<sup>a</sup> they will certainly say: What prevents it? Now surely on the day when it will come to them, it will not be averted from them, and that which they scoffed at will beset them.

**7a.** The meaning of '*arsh* ("Throne of Power") has been explained in 7:54b. For *kana*, see 2:213a. What is the relation between *water* and the *manifestation of the Power* of Allâh, for which the '*arsh* stands? This is explained by the Qur'ân itself: "And We made from water everything living" (21:30). Man is the highest developed form of life, and life is due to water. The great power of Allâh which is manifested in the

creation of man is thus connected with water. And as physical life grows out of water, so does devotional life grows out of revelation, which is so often compared with rain or water. Allâh's great power has thus been made manifest through water, and hence with the creation of the *samâwât* and the earth is mentioned the fact that Allâh's Throne of Power is ever on the waters. The words that follow make it clearer still; see the next note.

**7b.** The two words *balâ-hu* and *ibtalâ-hu* are synonymous and mean originally *the manifestation of good qualities* and *mean qualities* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtadâ*). The object of the creation of man and all that has been brought into existence is that the great qualities with which man is endowed should be manifested. But that manifestation, we are told in the words that follow, takes place, not in this life, but in the life after death. This truth is expressed in the words, *if you say, You shall surely be raised up after death*. For the use of the words, *balâ* and *ibtalâ*, in the sense of the manifestation of the great and good qualities with which man is endowed, see 8:17b.

**7c.** The word *sihr* is used here clearly in the sense of *deceit* or *falsehood*; see 2:102e.

**8a.** The stated period of time is thus referred to in 8:33: "And Allah would not chastise them while thou wast among them".

## SECTION 2: Truth of Revelation

**9** And if We make man taste mercy from Us, then withdraw it from him, he is surely despairing, ungrateful.

**10** And if We make him taste a favour after distress has afflicted him, he says: The evils are gone away from me. Certainly he is exultant, boastful,

**11** Except those who are patient and do good. For them is forgiveness and a great reward.

**12** Then, may it be that you will give up part of what is revealed to you and your breast will be straitened by it, because they say: Why has not a treasure been sent down for him or an *malak* come with him?<sup>a</sup> You are only a warner. And Allâh is in charge of all things.

**13** Or, say they: He has forged it. Say: Then bring ten forged chapters like it, and call upon whom you can besides Allâh, if you are truthful.<sup>a</sup>

**12a.** This passage does not signify that the Prophet intended to give up any part of the revelation; on the other hand, it is a strong statement indicating that he could not do it. It is a peculiar use of the word *la'alla*. *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî says: “You say of a person when you intend to show his remoteness from a thing: Maybe (Arabic, *la'alla-ka*) you have power to do such a thing”.

**13a.** This challenge is contained in four different chapters of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. Firstly in 17:88: “Say: If men and *jinn* should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'ân, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others”. This is the earliest in point of revelation. Then in the verse under discussion, the demand is reduced to ten chapters. Lastly in 10:38 and 2:23 they are challenged to produce a single chapter like the Qur'ân. Another point worth noting is that, while in some places men and *jinn* are challenged, in others the word *shuhadâ'*, which means their *great* or *learned men*, is substituted for *jinn*, thus showing that *jinn* in such places means only *their great men*; see 2:23a for full explanation.

**14** But if they answer you not, then know that it is revealed by Allâh's knowledge, and that there is no Deity but He. Will you then submit?<sup>a</sup>

**15** Whoever desires this world's life and its finery — We repay them their deeds therein, and they are not made to suffer loss in it.

**16** These are they for whom there is nothing but Fire in the Hereafter. And what they work therein is fruitless and their deeds are vain.<sup>a</sup>

**17** Is he then (like these) who has with him clear proof from his *Rabb*, and a witness from Him recites it, and before it (is) the Book of Mûsâ, a guide and a mercy? These believe in it. And whoever of the parties disbelieves in it, the Fire is his promised place. So be not in doubt about it. Surely it is the truth from your *Rabb*, but most men believe not.<sup>a</sup>

**18** And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allâh? These will be brought before their *Rabb*, and the witnesses will say: These are they who lied against their *Rabb*. Now surely the curse of Allâh is on the wrongdoers,<sup>a</sup>

**14a.** The disbelievers are addressed here, the meaning being that, if the false deities or the leaders do not answer their devotees when they call on them to assist them in producing a like of the Qur'ân, then at least no doubt should be left in their minds that the Qur'ân is not the work of the Prophet, but a revelation from the Divine Being.

**16a.** That is, their works and other deeds will not result in any good to them.

**17a.** The several statements made in this verse require to be explained. *He who has with him clear proof from His Rabb* applies to every believer in the truth of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân; the words *these believe* in it, occurring further on, make this clear. The *witness from Allâh*, who recites it, is the Holy Prophet, who is called a witness elsewhere, as being an exemplar for the believers. Besides being a clear proof in itself, the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân has a further evidence of its truth in the book of Mûsâ, which is, therefore, called a guide and a mercy, because it contains clear prophecies of the truth of the Prophet. The meaning of the whole passage is: He who, being a believer in the truth of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, has clear proof from his *Rabb*, and who has an exemplar for him in the person of the Holy Prophet, and has additional testimony of his truth in the book of Mûsâ, is not like him who loves this world and cares not for the Truth? The latter statement, being included in the previous verses, is omitted here.

**19** Who hinder (men) from the path of Allâh and desire to make it crooked. And they are disbelievers in the Hereafter.

**20** These will not escape in the earth,<sup>a</sup> nor have they guardians besides Allâh. The chastisement will be doubled for them. They could not bear to hear, and they did not see.<sup>b</sup>

**21** These are they who have lost Their *nafs*, and that which they forged is gone from them.

**22** Truly in the Hereafter they are the greatest losers.

**23** Surely those who believe and do good and humble themselves before their Rabb, these are the owners of the Garden; therein they will abide.

**24** The likeness of the two parties is as the blind and the deaf, and the seer and the hearer. Are they equal in condition? Will you not then mind?

### SECTION 3: **History of Nûh**

**25** And certainly We sent Nûh to his people: Surely I am a plain warner to you,

**18a.** The witnesses are according to some *the angels*; according to others, *the prophets* — and this is corroborated by 4:41; according to still others *the believers*.

**20a.** They would not escape the chastisement, if Allâh intended to punish them in this world. *A 'jaza-hû*, of which *mu 'jiz* is the noun form, may also be translated as *he found him without strength or ability*, or *he frustrated his power or purpose*.

**20b.** This only shows their great hatred of the truth. They could not bear even to hear what the Prophet said, and they ran away when he spoke.

**26** To serve none but Allâh. Verily I fear for you the chastisement of a painful day.

**27** But the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said: We see you not but a mortal like us, and we see not that any follow you but those who are the meanest of us at first thought. Nor do we see in you any superiority over us; nay, we deem you liars.

**28** He said: O my people, see you if I have with me clear proof from my *Rabb*, and He has granted me mercy from Himself and it has been made obscure to you. Can we compel you to (accept) it while you are averse to it?

**29** And, O my people, I ask you not for wealth (in return) for it. My reward is only with Allâh, and I am not going to drive away those who believe. Surely they will meet their *Rabb*, but I see you a people who are ignorant.

**30** And, O my people, who will help me against Allâh, if I drive them away? Will you not then mind?

**31** And I say not to you that I have the treasures of Allâh; and I know not the unseen; nor do I say that I am a *malak*. Nor do I say about those whom your eyes scorn that Allâh will not grant them (any) good — Allâh knows best what is in their *nafs* — for then indeed I should be of the wrongdoers.

**32** They said: O Nûh, indeed you have disputed with us and prolonged dispute with us, so bring upon us that which you threaten us with, if you are truthful.

**33** He said: Only Allâh will bring it on you, if He pleases, and you will not escape:

**34** And my advice will not profit you, if I intend to give you good advice, if Allâh intends to destroy you. He is your *Rabb*; and to Him you will be brought back.

**35** Or say they: He has forged it? Say: If I have forged it, on me is my guilt; and I am free of that of which you are guilty.<sup>a</sup>

#### SECTION 4: **History of Nûh**

**36** And it was revealed to Nûh: None of thy people will believe except those who have already believed, so grieve not at what they do:

**37** And make the ark under Our eyes and Our revelation, and speak not to Me on behalf of those who are unjust. Surely they will be drowned.

**38** And he began to make the ark. And whenever the chiefs of his people passed by him, they laughed at him. He said: If you laugh at us, surely we, too, laugh at you as you laugh (at us).<sup>a</sup>

**39** So you shall know who it is on whom will come a chastisement which will disgrace him, and on whom a lasting chastisement will fall.

**35a.** The change shows positively that the disbelievers of Makkah are meant, and the reference is to their calling the Qur'ân a forgery. This shows that the histories of the prophets are referred to in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân as a warning for the Prophet's opponents.

**38a.** The *laughing* of the righteous at the wicked is not to be taken literally. You laugh at a thing to show your contempt for it; even as the disbelieving people showed their contempt for the making of the ark, the believer in Divine promise shows his contempt for their opposition and their plans to destroy him. *Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharî gives another significance: *If you think us ignorant on account of what we are doing, we consider you ignorant on account of your disbelief ... because your thinking us ignorant is due really to your own ignorance.*

**40** At length when Our command came and water gushed forth from the valley,<sup>a</sup> We said: Carry in it two of all things, a pair,<sup>b</sup> and your own family — except those against whom the word has already gone forth — and those who believe. And there believed not with him but a few.

**41** And he said: Embark in it, in the name of Allâh be its sailing and its anchoring. Surely my *Rabb* is Forgiving, Merciful.

**42** And it moved on with them amid waves like mountains.<sup>a</sup> And Nûḥ called out to his son, and he was aloof: O my son, embark with us and be not with the disbelievers.

**40a.** *Fâr al-tannûr* is translated by Sale as meaning *the oven poured forth water*, by Palmer *the oven boiled*, and by Rodwell *the earth's surface boiled up*, all three at the same time adding a note that the word *tannûr* also signifies *a reservoir* (Palmer), or *a reservoir of water* (Rodwell), or *a place whence waters spring forth* or *where they are*

collected (Sale). But it is, I think, more a misconception of the word *fâra* which has led to the error, than that of the word *tannûr*. *Fâra* means *it (the water) boiled*, or *it (the fire) raged*, but neither of these significances is applicable here, as the *oven* could not *boil*, nor could it *rage*, because *tannûr* does not mean *fire*. But it has also another significance. *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane Says: “*Fâra*, said of water, signifies also *it welled* or *came forth from the earth* or *ground* (*Mughnî al-Labîb* (Grammar), by Al-Shaikh Jamâl al-Dîn ibn Hishâm Al-Ansârî); it *appeared*, *spouting forth from the spring* or *source* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ)”. Hence also *fawwârah* signifies *a spring* or *source of water*. And *tannûr*, according to the same authority, means *the highest part of the earth* or *ground* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ); *any place from which water pours forth*, *a place where the water of a valley collects* (*Al-Qâmûs al-Muhîṭ* (Dictionary), by Shaikh Majd al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qûb Al-Firozâbâdî). Now these two significances of the two words *fâra* and *tannûr* so suit each other, and each so suits the context, that they would appeal even to a man of ordinary intelligence. We know, from verse 43, where Noah’s son is made to say: “I will betake myself for refuge to a mountain,” that there must have been a valley.

**40b.** Each of a pair is called in Arabic a *zauj*, and hence the dual form *zaujain* means only *a pair*, and accordingly by *two zaujain* are meant *one male and one female of each pair*. By *all things* are apparently meant all things needed by Nûḥ, and not all things existing in the world, which was too extensive for Nûḥ to travel over.

**42a.** It should be borne in mind that the Qur’ân does not give any countenance to the story that the deluge covered the whole surface of the earth. On the other hand, it repeatedly speaks of Noah as having been sent to *his people*, i.e. to a single tribe, and according to the Divine law the punishment must have overtaken his people, who not only rejected the truth, but also sought to destroy Nûḥ and his followers. The mention of the water flowing from the valley also shows that it was only a tract of land that was deluged, and not the entire earth. The taking in of a pair of all things does not mean that Nûḥ had travelled over the whole earth and taken a pair of every living animal wherever it could be found: in that case he would have spent perhaps a thousand years in collecting pairs of all living creatures on earth, and then without success. The order is clearly to take in pairs of all those things that he considered necessary for himself and those who were with him in the ark. The Bible narrative,



which makes God “bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven” (Genesis 6:17), and then makes Noah collect and lodge in an ark a pair of each of the thousands of animals and birds, cannot be accepted.

**43** He said: I will betake myself for refuge to a mountain that will save me from the water. He said: There is none safe today from Allâh’s command, but he on whom He has mercy.<sup>a</sup> And a wave intervened between them, so he was among the drowned.

**44** And it was said: O earth, swallow your water, and O cloud, clear away. And the water was made to abate, and the affair was decided, and it rested on the Jûdî,<sup>a</sup> and it was said: Away with the iniquitous people!

**45** And Nûh cried to his *Rabb* and said: My *Rabb*, surely my son is of my family, and Your promise is true, and You are the Just of the judges.

**46** He said: O Nûh, he is not of your family; he is (an embodiment of) unrighteous conduct.<sup>a</sup> So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge. I admonish thee lest thou be of the ignorant.

**43a.** *Man rahîma* may either mean *He Who has mercy*, referring to Allâh, the significance being that only the Merciful One can save from the punishment, or the phrase may mean *he on whom He has mercy*. The meaning in the latter case is: Nothing can protect from the chastisement sent by Allah, but he only will be protected on whom Allâh has mercy.

**44a.** The Greek name of this mountain is said to be Gordyoei, being one of those mountains which divide Armenia on the south from Mesopotamia. Sale says: “The tradition which affirms the ark to have rested on those mountains must have been very ancient, since it is a tradition of the Chaldeans themselves”. And again: “The relics of the ark were also to be seen in the time of Epiphanius, if we are to believe him (Epiph. Haeres, 18); we are also told that the Emperor Heraclius went from the town of Thamanin up to the mountain Al-Jûdî, and saw the place of the ark (Elmacin, I. i.c.l.). Formerly there also existed a famous monastery, called the monastery of the ark, on one of those mountains”.

**47** He said: My *Rabb*, I seek refuge in You from asking of You that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I shall be of the losers.

**48** It was said: O Nûḥ, descend with peace from Us and blessing on you and on nations (springing) from those with you. And there are nations whom We afford provisions, then a painful punishment from Us afflicts them.

**49** These are announcements relating to the unseen which We reveal to you; you did not know them — (neither) you nor your people — before this. So be patient. Surely, the (good) end is for the dutiful.<sup>a</sup>

## SECTION 5: History of Hûd

**50** And to ‘Âd (We sent) their brother Hûd.<sup>a</sup> He said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no deity save Him. You are only fabricators.

**46a.** When it is meant to speak of a person as the very embodiment of a certain quality, he is designated not as the possessor of that quality, but as that quality itself. Thus you speak of a person as being *karm*, literally *excellence*, or *jûd*, literally *charity*, meaning he is the very embodiment of excellence or charity. In 2:177 it is said, literally, *righteousness is he who believes*, the meaning apparently being that such a person is the embodiment of righteousness. *Inna-hû ‘amal-un ḡhairu ṣaliḥ-in* thus means that: *he is an embodiment of unrighteous conduct*.

**49a.** The announcement relating to the unseen is not the history of Nûḥ, but the fate of the opponents of the Holy Prophet, as read in that history. The words that follow — *be patient* — are a clear indication, for patient waiting was needed for the fate of the Prophet’s opponents, not for anything relating to Nûḥ’s history. At the end of the last section there is also a similar reference to the opponents of the Holy Prophet; compare also the 26th chapter, in which the history of every prophet is concluded with the words: “Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them believe not”, where the fate of the opponents of the Holy Prophet is indicated as being identical with the fate of those who opposed earlier prophets.

**50a.** For ‘Ad and their prophet Hûd, see 7:65a.

**51** O my people, I ask of you no reward for it. My reward is only with Him Who created me. Do you not then understand?

**52** And, O my people, ask forgiveness of your *Rabb*, then turn to Him, He will send on you clouds pouring down abundance of rain and add strength to your strength, and turn not back, guilty.

**53** They said: O Hûd, you have brought us no clear argument, and we are not going to desert our deities for your word, and we are not believers in you.

**54** We say naught but that some of our deities have smitten you with evil.

He said: Surely I call Allâh to witness, and do you, too, bear witness that I am innocent of what you associate (with Allâh)

**55** Besides Him. So scheme against me all together, then give me no respite.

**56** Surely I put my trust in Allâh, my *Rabb* and your *Rabb*. There is no living creature but He grasps it by its forelock. Surely my *Rabb* is on the right path.<sup>a</sup>

**57** But if you turn away, then indeed I have delivered to you that with which I am sent to you. And my *Rabb* will bring another people in your place, and you cannot do Him any harm. Surely my *Rabb* is the Preserver of all things.

**56a.** *My Rabb is on the right path* signifies that He does not deviate from justice so that He should destroy the righteous or that the iniquitous should escape His punishment.

**58** And when Our commandment came to pass, We delivered Hûd and those who believed with him with mercy from Us; and We delivered them from a hard chastisement.

**59** And such were ‘Âd. They denied the messages of their *Rabb*, and disobeyed His messengers and followed the bidding of every insolent opposer (of truth).

**60** And they were overtaken by a curse in this world and on the day of Resurrection. Now surely ‘Âd disbelieved in their *Rabb*. Now surely, away with ‘Ad, the people of Hûd!

## SECTION 6: **History of Ṣâlih**

**61** And to Thamûd (We sent) their brother Ṣâlih. He said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no deity other than Him. He brought you forth from the earth and made you

dwell in it, so ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him. Surely my *Rabb* is Nigh, Answering.

**62** They said: O Sâlih, you was among us a centre of (our) hopes before this. Do you forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? And surely we are in grave doubt about that to which you call us.

**63** He said: O my people, see you if I have clear proof from my *Rabb* and He has granted me mercy from Himself — who will then help me against Allâh, if I disobey Him? So you would add to me naught but perdition.

**64** And, O my people, this is Allâh's she-camel,<sup>a</sup> a sign for you, so leave her to pasture on Allâh's earth and touch her not with evil, lest a near chastisement overtake you.

**65** But they hamstrung her, so he said: Enjoy yourselves in your houses for three days. That is a promise not to be belied.

**66** So when Our commandment came to pass, We saved Sâlih and those who believed with him by mercy from Us from the disgrace of that day. Surely your *Rabb* — He is the Strong, the Mighty.

**67** And the cry<sup>a</sup> overtook those who did wrong, so they were motionless bodies in their abodes,

**68** As though they had never dwelt therein. Now surely Thamûd disbelieved in their *Rabb*. So away with Thamûd!

## SECTION 7: **Ibrâhîm and Lût**

**69** And certainly Our messengers came to Ibrâhîm with good news. They said: Peace! Peace! Said he. And he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf.<sup>a</sup>

**64a.** See 7:73a, 74a. For the she-camel, see 7:73c.

**67a.** It was an earthquake; see 7:78a.

**69a.** Compare Gen. 18:1– 7. According to the Bible (Genesis 18:8), they ate the roasted calf and other food provided by Abraham. But the contrary, as Rodwell notes, was maintained by the Rabbins, and he directs attention to Is. Baba Mezia, fol. 86: “They made as though they ate”. Whether they were angels or men, is not made clear here or anywhere else in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. But owing to the fact that they did not partake of food, and the fact that they brought to Ibrâhîm news of a son and of

the destruction of Lût's people, they are generally looked upon as angels who appeared in the similitude of men.

**70** But when he saw that their hands reached not to it, he mistrusted them and conceived fear of them. They said: Fear not; we have been sent to Lût's people.<sup>a</sup>

**71** And his wife was standing (by), so she wondered. Then We gave her the good news of Ishâq, and beyond Ishâq, of Ya'qûb.<sup>a</sup>

**72** She said: O wonder!<sup>a</sup> Shall I bear a son when I am an extremely old woman, and this my husband an extremely old man? This is a wonderful thing indeed!

**73** They said: Wonder you at Allâh's commandment? The mercy of Allâh and His blessings on you, O people of the house!<sup>a</sup> Surely He is Praised, Glorious.

**74** So when fear departed from Abraham and good news came to him, he began to plead with Us for Lût's people.<sup>a</sup>

**70a.** Elsewhere it is made clear that the news of the birth of a son was given to Ibrâhîm first: "So he conceived fear of them. They said: Fear not. And they gave him good news of a boy possessing knowledge. Then his wife came up in grief, and she smote her face and said: A barren old woman!" (51:28, 29). This explains Sarah's wonder as stated in verse 71. It was after receiving the good news of the birth of a son that Abraham was informed of the destruction of Lût's people. The statement made further on in verse 71 that Sarah was given the good news of the birth of a son is by way of reassurance on her expression of wonder, and to give the further news of a son's son, Jacob.

**71a.** Compare Genesis 18:10–12. The mention of a son's son (Jacob) was to show that that son should have progeny. It should be borne in mind that *warâ'*, which ordinarily signifies *beyond*, *behind* or *before*, also means a son's son (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*). Elsewhere Jacob is expressly called *nâfilah* (21:72) which means a *grandson*.

**72a.** The original words are *yâ wailatâ*, and they are expressive of grief and sorrow. It should be remembered, however, that according to the best authorities *wail* is used to express *wonder*, whether the occasion be one of weal or woe. "And *wail* does occur in the sense of *wonder*" (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*). According to *Bahr al-Muḥîṭ* (Commentary), by *Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû*

‘Abd Allâh Abû *Hayyân* al-Undlusî, *it is a word which is frequently used by women when anything causing wonder occurs to them.*

**73a.** *Ahl al-bait* includes the wife of a person; in fact, it is Ibrâhîm’s wife that is primarily addressed here. The same phrase in the case of the Holy Prophet (33:33) includes his wives as well as his children.

**75** Surely Ibrâhîm was forbearing, tender-hearted, oft-returning (to Allâh).

**76** O Ibrâhîm, cease from this. Surely the decree of your *Rabb* has gone forth and there must come to them a chastisement that cannot be averted.

**77** And when Our messengers came to Lût, he was grieved for them, and he was unable to protect them,<sup>a</sup> and said: This is a distressful day!

**78** And his people came to him, (as if) driven on towards him, and they were used to the doing of evil deeds before. He said: O my people, these are my daughters — they are purer for you; so guard against (the punishment of) Allâh and disgrace me not about my guests. Is there not among you any right-minded man?<sup>a</sup>

**79** They said: Certainly you know that we have no claim on thy daughters, and you know what we desire.

**74a.** Compare Genesis 18:21–23.

**77a.** *Dhar’*, which primarily signifies *stretching forth the arm*, is used in the sense of *power* or *ability* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ*). The meaning of the phrase here is that *he was unable to do the thing, or he lacked strength to accomplish the affair* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

**78a.** Lot, it appears from Genesis 19:9, was a stranger in the city: “This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge,” and the messengers being strangers, the townsmen would not allow him to keep them. Lot offered his daughters as hostages so that he might be allowed to keep his guests with him, for according to 15:70 he had not permission to allow any stranger to come under his roof: “Did we not forbid thee from people?” i.e. from giving shelter to them. This may have been due to the constant danger of tribal fighting. Another view is that Lût offered his daughters for marriage, as thus he would not be a stranger among them but would be one of them. Some commentators have suggested that Lût did not point to his real daughters, but to women of the tribe, because a prophet would speak of the women of his tribe as

his daughters (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî and the *Jâmi‘ al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur’ân* (Commentary), by Al-Shaikh Mu‘în al-Dîn ibn Safî al-Dîn), and in that case he did no more than point to the natural relation of man and woman. The answer of his people seems, however, to relate to his daughters.

**80** He said: Would that I had the power to repel you! — rather I shall have recourse to a strong support.<sup>a</sup>

**81** They said: O Lût, we are the messengers of your *Rabb*. They shall not reach you. So travel with your people for a part of the night — and let none of you turn back — except your wife.<sup>a</sup> Surely whatsoever befalls them shall befall her. Surely their appointed time is the morning. Is not the morning nigh?

**82** So when Our decree came to pass, We turned them upside down,<sup>a</sup> and rained on them stones,<sup>b</sup> as decreed,<sup>c</sup> one after another,

**83** Marked (for punishment) with your *Rabb*. And it is not far off from the wrongdoers.<sup>a</sup>

## SECTION 8: History of Shu‘aib

**84** And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shu‘aib. He said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no other deity save Him. And give not short measure and weight. I see you in prosperity, and I fear for you the chastisement of an all-encompassing day:

**80a.** Allâh is the strong support to Whom the righteous have recourse when they are in trouble. The particle *au* signifies *or*, as well as *rather*, in the latter case being the equivalent of *bal* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

**81a.** Compare Genesis 19:26.

**82a.** It was a severe earthquake, which so utterly demolished the cities as to turn them upside down. In 15:73 it is called *saiḥah*, i.e., *the rumbling* that precedes an earthquake; see 7:84a.

**82b.** The raining down of stones might have been the result of a volcanic eruption which was accompanied by an earthquake.

**82c.** The word *sijjîl* is derived from the root *sajala*, meaning *he poured forth* (water), from which a large number of derivatives have followed, as usual in Arabic. *Sajjala*

means *he wrote a paper or a scroll, or decided judicially*. *Sijjil* means *what had been written or decreed for them* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

**83a.** The concluding words indicate a reversion to the subject of the punishment of the opponents of the Holy Prophet. *It* refers to the *punishment*.

**85** And, O my people, give full measure and weight justly, and defraud not men of their things, and act not corruptly in the land, making mischief:

**86** What remains with Allâh is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a keeper over you.<sup>a</sup>

**87** They said: O Shu‘aib, does your prayer enjoin you that we should forsake what our fathers worshipped or that we should not do what we please with regard to our property? Forsooth you are the forbearing, the right-directing one!

**88** He said: O my people, see you if I have a clear proof from my *Rabb* and He has given me a goodly sustenance from Himself. And I desire not to act in opposition to you, in that which I forbid you. I desire nothing but reform, so far as I am able. And with none but Allâh is the direction of my affair to a right issue. In Him I trust and to Him I turn.

**89** And, O my people, let not opposition to me make you guilty so that there may befall you the like of that which befell the people of Nûh, or the people of Hûd, or the people of Sâlih. Nor are the people of Lût far off from you.

**86a.** *Baqiyyat Allâh* would properly signify *that part of man’s doing which remains with Allâh, i.e., the righteous or good works, of which the recompense remains*, the word conveying the same significance as *bâqiyât* in 18:46 and 19:76. But it may also mean *what Allâh leaves to you after you have paid the dues of others*.

**90** And ask forgiveness of your *Rabb*, then turn to Him. Surely my *Rabb* is *Rahîm* (Merciful), *Wadûd* (Loving-kind).

**91** They said: O Shu‘aib, we understand not much of what you say and surely we see you to be weak among us. And were it not for your family, we would surely stone you, and you are not mighty against us.

**92** He said: O my people, is my family more esteemed by you than Allâh? And you neglect Him as a thing cast behind your backs! Surely my *Rabb* encompasses what you do.



**93** And, O my people, act according to your ability, I too am acting. You will come to know soon who it is on whom will light the punishment that will disgrace him, and who it is that is a liar. And watch, surely I too am watching with you.

**94** And when Our decree came to pass, We delivered Shu'aib and those who believed with him by mercy from Us. And the cry overtook those who were iniquitous, so they were motionless bodies in their abodes,

**95** As though they had never dwelt in them. So away with Midian, just as Thamûd perished!

### SECTION 9: The Iniquitous and the Righteous

**96** And certainly We sent Mûsâ with Our signs and a clear authority,

**97** To Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they followed the bidding of Pharaoh; and Pharaoh's bidding was not right-directing.

**98** He will lead his people on the day of Resurrection, and bring them down to the Fire. And evil the place to which they are brought!

**99** And they are overtaken by a curse in this (world), and on the day of Resurrection. Evil the gift which shall be given!

**100** This is an account of the towns which We relate to you. Of them are some that stand and (others) mown down.

**101** And We wronged them not but they wronged themselves. And their deities whom they called upon besides Allâh availed them naught when the decree of your *Rabb* came to pass. And they added to them naught but ruin.

**102** And such is the punishment of your *Rabb*, when He punishes the towns while they are iniquitous. Surely His punishment is painful, severe.

**103** Surely there is a sign in this for him who fears the chastisement of the Hereafter. That is a day on which people will be gathered together, and that is a day to be witnessed.

**104** And We delay it not but for an appointed term.

**105** On the day when it comes, no *nafs* will speak except by His permission; so (some) of them will be unhappy and (others) happy.

**106** Then as for those who are unhappy, they will be in the Fire; for them therein will be sighing and groaning —

**107** Abiding therein so long as the *samâwât* and the earth endure, except as your *Rabb* please. Surely your *Rabb* is Doer of what He intends.<sup>a</sup>

**108** And as for those who are made happy, they will be in the Garden abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your *Rabb* please — a gift never to be cut off.<sup>a</sup>

**107a.** This limitation on the duration of abiding in hell — *except as your Rabb please*— is given twice in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, here and in 6:128, and it shows clearly that the punishment of hell is not everlasting. A comparison with the verse that follows makes it clearer. There, too, we have that those in paradise will abide there as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your *Rabb* please, but the statement is immediately followed by another: *A gift never to be cut off*. This shows that in fact there is no limitation upon the eternity of paradise, and the words *except as your Rabb please* have been used, in the case of paradise, only to express the unbounded power and greatness of the Divine Being and the fact that it is due to God's pleasure that they are there. In the case of hell, however, the words *except as your Rabb please* are followed by a statement which corroborates the limitation thus placed, for, *Fa'âl*, as an attribute of the Divine Being, indicates that He does even those things which seem impossible to others, the word being an intensive form of *fâ'îl*, meaning *doer*. It should be noted further that in both cases it is *Rabb*, literally, *the Nourisher to perfection*, Whose will is to be exercised. The end is in both cases the same. Man is ultimately to be brought to perfection, but this cannot be, unless those in hell are taken out of it and set on the road to spiritual progress, *thrown into the river of Life* as a hadîth has it.

Various sayings of the Holy Prophet corroborate the statement made above. For instance, the concluding portion of a hadîth which is met with in one of the most reliable collections runs thus: “Then will Allâh say: The angels and the prophets and the faithful have all in their turn interceded for the sinners, and now there remains none to intercede for them except the most Merciful of all the merciful ones. So He will take out a handful from the Fire and bring out a people *who never worked any good*” (Bukhârî 97:24). According to this hadîth, such people are called *Tulaqâ al-Rahmân*, or *the freed ones of the Beneficent*, Who exercises His mercy towards those who have done nothing to deserve it. There are also other sayings in the *Kanz al-Ummâl*: “Surely a day will come over hell when it will be like a field of corn that has

dried up after flourishing for a while”; and again: “Surely a day will come over hell when there will not be a single human being in it” (volume vii, page 245). There is also a saying of ‘Umar on record: “Even if the dwellers in hell may be numberless as the sands of the desert, a day will surely come when they will be taken out of it” (*Fath al-Bârî fî Sharh Sahîh Bukhârî* (Hadîth), by Imâm ibn Hajar ‘Asqalânî).

One question, however, remains to be answered, and that is the use of the word *abad*, which is generally considered as meaning *forever*. The abiding in hell for *abad* is mentioned thrice in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân, in 4:169, 33:65 and 72:23. It is, however, stated by all lexicologists that *abad* signifies *a long time* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), being synonymous with *dahr tawîl* or *a long time* (*Mughnî al-Labîb* (Grammar), by Al-Shaikh Jamâl al-Dîn ibn Hishâm Al-Ansârî), as also *time without end* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ). It is due to its significance as *a long time* that it has a plural form *abad*, which it could not have if *eternity* were its only significance. The Qur’ân makes this use of the word clear by stating in 78:23 that the disbelievers will remain in hell for *ahqâb*, i.e. *long years*, the word being plural of *huqbah*, which means *seventy or eighty years* (see 78:23a).

**108a.** In accordance with what is said here in connection with the heavenly life, that it is a gift which shall never be cut off, we have in 15:48: “Nor will they be ejected there from”.

**109** So be not thou in doubt as to that which these worship. They worship only as their fathers worshipped before. And surely We shall pay them in full their due undiminished.

## SECTION 10: Believers Comforted

**110** And We certainly gave the Book to Mûsâ, but differences arose therein.<sup>a</sup> And had not a word gone forth from your *Rabb*, the matter would have been decided between them. And they are surely in a disquieting doubt about it.

**111** And your *Rabb* will surely pay back to all their deeds in full. He indeed is Aware of what they do.

**112** Continue then in the right way as you are commanded, as also (should) those who turn (to Allâh) with you. And be not inordinate, (O men). Surely He is Seer of what you do.

**113** And incline not to those who do wrong, lest the fire touch you; and you have no protectors besides Allâh, then you would not be helped.<sup>a</sup>

**114** And keep up prayer at the two ends of the day and in the first hours of the night. Surely good deeds take away evil deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful.<sup>a</sup>

**110a.** *Ikhtalafa* means also *khâlafa*, i.e. *he acted in opposition to*, or *disagreed with* (see 2:176a for full explanation), and thus the words may mean that the Jews acted against it.

**113a.** Not only is man forbidden to do any wrong himself, but he should keep himself at a safe distance from wrong and refrain from leaning towards the wrongdoers.

**114a.** The times of prayer are clearly indicated in this verse. Of the two ends of the day, the first is the *fajr*, or the prayer *before sunrise*, and the second includes the *zuhr*, or *the early afternoon*, and the '*asr*', or *the later afternoon*, prayers. In the first hours of the night we have the *Maghrib*, or *the after sunset prayer*, and the '*ishâ*', or the prayer *before going to bed*. The two afternoon prayers and the two after sunset prayers, which are spoken of together, may under exceptional circumstances be said together.

**115** And be patient, for surely Allâh wastes not the reward of the doers of good.

**116** Why were there not then among the generations before you those possessing understanding,<sup>a</sup> forbidding mischief in the earth, except a few among them whom We delivered? And the unjust pursued the enjoyment of plenty, and they were guilty.

**117** And your *Rabb* would not destroy the towns unjustly, while their people acted well.<sup>a</sup>

**118** And if your *Rabb* had pleased, He would have made people a single nation.<sup>a</sup> And they cease not to differ,

**119** Except those on whom your *Rabb* has mercy; and for this did He create them.<sup>a</sup> And the word of your Rabb is fulfilled: I shall fill hell with *jinn* and men, all together.<sup>b</sup>

**116a.** The phrase *ulû baqiyyah* is interpreted in a number of ways: *persons possessed of excellence*, or *possessing a relic of judgment and intelligence*, or *persons of understanding and discrimination*, or *persons of obedience* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). For the word *baqiyyah*, see 86a.

**117a.** We are told here that Allâh does not destroy people unjustly; He destroys them only when they act corruptly and make mischief in the land. He would not destroy them *if they act well*, whatever their beliefs. Most of the commentators take the word *zulm* here as meaning *shirk*, the significance being that Allâh would not destroy people, even though they were guilty of *shirk*, provided they *acted well*. The translation in this case would be, *your Rabb would not destroy the towns for wrong beliefs, while their people acted well*. It should be noted that the word *zulm* is very broad in its significance. According to *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *zulm* is of three kinds: (1) as between man and Allâh, the greatest of which is *kufr* or *disbelief* and *shirk* or *polytheism*; this would, of course, include all wrong beliefs with regard to the Divine Being; (2) as between man and man, which would include all kinds of transgressions involving a violation of the rights of others; (3) as between man and his own self, which would include all kinds of guilty action injurious not to others but to man's own self.

**118a.** Allâh does not force men to one particular belief; He has given them the choice to accept or reject the truth.

**119a.** Here it is clearly stated that Allâh created all men to have mercy on them. By His mercy He guides some to the right path, while to others, who go over to evil and make themselves deserving of hell, mercy will come only after suffering. It is by their own hands that they get into distress and difficulty, while Allâh has mercy on them in extricating them from it.

**120** And all We relate to you of the account of the messengers is to strengthen your heart therewith. And in this have come to you the truth and an admonition and a reminder for the believers.

**121** And say to those who believe not: Act according to your power, surely we too are acting;

**122** And wait, surely we are waiting (also).

**123** And Allâh's is the unseen in the *samâwât* and the earth, and to Him the whole affair will be returned. So serve Him and put your trust in Him. And your *Rabb* is not heedless of what you do.

**119b.** Because they went against the ways which Allâh had mercifully shown to them, therefore they must pass through another ordeal, so that they may be purged of evil and made fit for devotional progress.